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June 23, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The Sonoma County Office of Education and Sonoma County Board of Education believe that firearm safety is of crucial importance for students, families, schools, and our communities. Between 1991 and 2011, Sonoma County lost 58 children and teens to firearm homicides, suicides, and accidents.¹ This is tragic and unacceptable. To help decrease the number of children and teen deaths and injuries caused by firearms, and to help keep our communities safe, we have prepared the attached Firearm Safety Fact Sheet. In preparing this Fact Sheet, we sought input from the firearm safety community.

The Fact Sheet includes simple and straightforward recommendations for parents, guardians, and gun owners to follow. It provides tips on safe storage of firearms, explains legal risks associated with keeping a loaded firearm, and offers suggestions for talking to children about firearms. The Fact Sheet also provides recommendations regarding imitation firearms, which may be viewed as less dangerous than firearms but can, in fact, sometimes cause serious injury and death. The Fact Sheet encourages parents and gun owners to practice safe gun handling. Finally, the Fact Sheet provides resources for you and your family to learn more about gun safety and preventing school violence.

We take the issue of firearm and imitation firearm safety very seriously. Keeping our students safe and in secure learning environments is very important. We strongly encourage you to read the Fact Sheet closely, take the time to educate yourself about guns and gun safety, and talk to your children about gun safety.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Herrington".

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Willbanks".

Kathleen Willbanks
President, Board of Education

¹ California Department of Public Health Vital Statistics Death Statistical Master Files: <http://epicenter.cdph.ca.gov>.